

32. A starch-based composite composition comprising a first region that includes a starch-based composition and a second region adjacent to the first region that includes a coating composition, the composite composition formed by the process comprising the steps of:

providing an intermediate aqueous starch-based composition including water, a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% by weight, and a fibrous material having an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1, wherein the intermediate composition has a viscosity greater than about 10 Pa·s, wherein the starch-based binder includes a gelatinized component comprising gelatinized starch in an amount from about 5% to about 70% by weight of the starch-based binder, and wherein the balance of the starch-based binder comprises an ungelatinized component comprising ungelatinized, unmodified starch granules, wherein the gelatinized component aids in the dispersion of the fibrous material throughout the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition during mixing;

forming the first region of the starch-based composite composition by heating the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition so as to at least partially gelatinize the starch granules and so as to also remove at least a portion of the water by evaporation so as to cause the starch-based binder to become at least partially solidified; and

forming the second region of the starch-based composite composition by positioning a coating composition that is resistant to moisture adjacent to the first region, wherein the coating composition includes at least one of an edible oil, a drying oil, melamine, an epoxy resin, a terpene resin, polyvinyl chloride, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, a polyacrylate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, methocel, polyethylene glycol, an acrylic, an acrylic copolymer, polyurethane, polylactic acid, polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer, soybean protein, or a wax.

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33. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers have a length greater than about 0.3 mm.

34. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers have a length greater than about 1.5 mm.

35. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers are included in an amount in a range from about 2% to about 80% by weight of the intermediate aqueous composition.

36. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition further includes an inorganic filler dispersed therein.

37. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 36, wherein the inorganic filler is included in an amount in a range from about 20% to about 90% by weight of the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition.

38. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the first region includes sufficient void spaces so as to have a density in a range from about 0.05 g/cm<sup>3</sup> to about 1 g/cm<sup>3</sup>.

39. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the first region includes sufficient void spaces so as to have a density in a range from about 0.1 g/cm<sup>3</sup> to about 0.5 g/cm<sup>3</sup>.

*40* A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the first region includes an exterior skin subregion having a density and an interior foam subregion adjacent to the exterior skin subregion having a density that is significantly lower than the density of the exterior skin subregion.

*41* A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the first region has a cross-sectional thickness in a range of about 0.5 mm to about 5 mm.

42. A starch-based composite composition comprising a first region that includes a starch-based composition and a second region adjacent to the first region that includes a laminating composition, the composite composition formed by the process comprising the steps of:

providing an intermediate aqueous starch-based composition including water, a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% by weight, and a fibrous material having an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1, wherein the intermediate composition has a viscosity greater than about 10 Pa.s, wherein the starch-based binder includes a gelatinized component comprising gelatinized starch in an amount from about 5% to about 70% by weight of the starch-based binder and wherein the balance of the starch-based binder comprises an ungelatinized component comprising ungelatinized, unmodified starch granules, wherein the gelatinized component aids in the dispersion of the fibrous material throughout the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition during mixing;

forming the first region of the starch-based composite composition by heating the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition so as to at least partially gelatinize the starch granules and so as to also remove at least a portion of the water by evaporation so as to cause the starch-based binder to become at least partially solidified; and

forming the second region of the starch-based composite composition by positioning a substantially solid laminating composition that is resistant to moisture adjacent to the first region after the starch-based binder has become at least partially solidified.

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43. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 42, wherein the laminating composition includes a biodegradable polymer selected from the group consisting of cellulosic ethers, cellulose acetate, starches, biodegradable polyamides, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polylactic acid, polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer, other biodegradable polyester resins, soybean protein, and mixtures thereof.

44. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 42, wherein the laminating composition is a substantially uniform film.

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45. A starch-based composite composition comprising a first region that includes a starch-based composition and a second region adjacent to the first region that includes a biodegradable material, the composite composition formed by the process comprising the steps of:

providing an intermediate aqueous starch-based composition including water, a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% by weight, and a fibrous material having an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1, wherein the intermediate composition has a viscosity greater than about 10 Pa·s, wherein the starch-based binder includes a gelatinized component comprising gelatinized starch in an amount from about 5% to about 70% by weight of the starch-based binder, and wherein the balance of the starch-based binder comprises an ungelatinized component comprising ungelatinized, unmodified starch granules, wherein the gelatinized component aids in the dispersion of the fibrous material throughout the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition during mixing;

forming the first region of the starch-based composite composition by heating the intermediate aqueous starch-based composition so as to at least partially gelatinize the starch granules and so as to also remove at least a portion of the water by evaporation so as to cause the starch-based binder to become at least partially solidified; and

forming the second region of the starch-based composite composition by positioning a biodegradable material adjacent to the first region, the biodegradable material being at least one of a biodegradable polyester resin, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polylactic acid, or a polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer.

*Original claims*

46. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 45, wherein the starch-based binder includes at least one of native starch or a starch derivative that has been gelatinized in water and then substantially solidified through removal of at least a portion of the water by evaporation.

47. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 45, wherein the starch-based binder is formed by heating a mixture of native starch granules and pregelatinized starch in water so as to at least partially gelatinize the native starch granules and then remove a substantial portion of the water by evaporation.

48. A starch-based composite composition as defined in claim 47, wherein the biodegradable material is initially in liquid form when positioned adjacent to the first region.

49. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 47, wherein the biodegradable material is a laminating material when positioned adjacent to the first region.

50. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 49, wherein the laminating material is a substantially uniform film.

51. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 49, wherein the fibers have a length greater than about 2 mm.